At the Virtual Learning Academy Charter School (VLACS) in New Hampshire, students can access courses anytime, anywhere. VLACS offers flexible schedules for students who are looking to make up credits or competencies, need to work outside of the traditional classroom setting, or want to take advanced placement courses or earn college credits.

At Pittsfield Middle-High School in New Hampshire, students maintain a personalized learning plan or educational portfolio that guides their progress in meeting learning targets and benchmarks that all students must reach in order to pass.

At Sanford High School in Maine, students maintain a personalized learning plan or educational portfolio that guides their progress in meeting learning targets and benchmarks that all students must reach in order to pass.

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ABOUT US

The Nellie Mae Education Foundation is the largest charitable organization in New England dedicated exclusively to education. We’re committed to reshaping the high school learning experience by working with schools and organizations to implement the principles of student-centered learning—learning that is personalized, engaging, competency-based, and happens anytime, anywhere. Since 1998, the Foundation has distributed over $170 million in grants.

A CHANGING WORLD DEMANDS A CHANGED SYSTEM

Today, we know more than ever about how students learn. But traditional school systems, designed in a different time for a different purpose, aren’t providing the best environments to prepare students for success in today’s economy.

Students engage with material in different ways, so the learning process doesn’t look the same for every student. Public schools need student-centered strategies, rather than a top-down, one-size-fits-all approach, that meets students where they are and engages them in the process.

Today’s innovation economy and diverse society require skills that aren’t addressed in a traditional curriculum—such as critical thinking, problem solving, communication, collaboration, self-directed learning, and social-emotional skills.

WHAT IS STUDENT-CENTERED LEARNING?

Student-centered learning engages students in their own successes—and incorporates their interests and skills into the learning process. Rather than having teachers hand down information, students can engage with teachers and their peers in real time—preparing them to participate in a skilled workforce later in life.

Student-centered means:

- **learning is personalized**
  Personalized learning recognizes that students engage in different ways and in different places. Students benefit from individually paced, targeted learning tasks that start from where the student is, formatively assessing existing skills and knowledge, and addressing the student’s needs.

- **learning is competency-based**
  Students move ahead when they’ve demonstrated mastery of content, not when they’ve reached a certain birthday or endured the required hours in a classroom.

- **learning happens anytime, anywhere**
  Learning takes place beyond the traditional school day, and even the school year. The school’s walls are permeable—learning is not restricted to the classroom.

- **students take ownership**
  Student-centered learning engages students in their own successes—and incorporates their interests and skills into the learning process.